



18 December 2020

Dear Parents and Carers,

You will probably have seen or read the news stories about schools and colleges being asked to implement a phased start to the spring term and being invited to set up a mass Covid testing programme for pupils and staff. I am writing to you today to explain how we intend to proceed following this last-minute request from the government. We will follow the government guidance on how to phase the start of term, which is intended to ensure effective education can continue but also reduce the spread of the virus as pupils and staff return after Christmas.

Phased Start to Spring Term

On Tuesday 5th January the following pupils should come into school:
Y11 pupils, vulnerable children and children of critical workers.

During this first week of term, all other pupils should stay at home. We will be providing remote education for those pupils. More details will follow in the last week of the holiday.

On Monday 11th January, all pupils should come to school as normal.

Mass Testing Programme

We are positive about the potential for the mass testing of pupils and staff in schools, as a way of reducing the spread of the virus and enabling fewer pupils and staff to have to self-isolate. You can read more about how the government expects this programme to work here. <https://dfemedia.blog.gov.uk/2020/12/15/mass-testing-in-schools-your-questions-answered/>

Setting up this programme in schools is an incredibly complex operation. We have been sent some information about how it should work already, but more detailed guidance is expected to be produced by the government over the Christmas holiday period.

At the start of term, the local authority liaising with all schools, is to review what the expectations are, what support is available from the government or other agencies, and what schools can realistically deliver.

We will let you know more about our plans as soon as we can in January. In the meantime, from the start of next term, we will continue to implement the safety measures we have been using in the autumn term.

Please accept our apologies for having to send this letter after term has already ended. We are having to respond to a vast quantity of extremely last minute and complex government guidance. Staff at Holy Family will be working on the logistics of this over the holiday to ensure as much as possible is in place. Our training day on Monday 4th January will also be used to respond to the local authority and government guidance.

We will be back in touch on Tuesday 29th December with more detailed arrangements for the first week of the spring term.

This link confirms the list of 'critical workers'. We will contact you on 29/12/20 with the process of how to let us know if you are a critical worker.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-maintaining-educational-provision/guidance-for-schools-colleges-and-local-authorities-on-maintaining-educational-provision>

Our staff will also contact parents/carers of our vulnerable children on that date.

Thank you for your patience and best wishes for your Christmas break.

Yours faithfully,

Mrs D Mitchell
Headteacher